

EDITORIAL

CURRENT EVENTS: THE DRIFT OF THINGS AS WE SEE IT.

The threatened war between England and Russia overshadowed all other events of last week. In the face of the terrible blunder—or worse—which at times seemed likely to bring Europe's greatest nations to the verge of conflict, people lost interest even in the Presidential election now so near at hand. Again a notable case of mob murder was reported, this time at Berkeley, in old Virginia. Bryan, Fairbanks and Parker made notable campaign speeches. At St. Louis a comparatively successful effort was made to operate a flying machine.

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The Strained Relations Between England and Russia.

It was not until last Monday that it became known that on the previous Friday night an English fishing fleet, quietly sailing in the waters between England and Denmark, had been fired upon by the Baltic fleet of the Russian Empire, now hastening to the Far East to take part in the war against Japan. Of the defenceless fishermen, two were killed outright and eighteen others injured; the Russian vessels gave no aid to the wounded.

The news of this almost inexplicable affair fired all England. From the very first, talk of war was rife. The Russian Ambassador returning to London from a trip on the Continent, was met by an unmannerly mob at the railroad station and his carriage stoned. At Barry, England, a steamboat about to sail with provisions for the Russian fleet, was scuttled by the enraged populace.

Immediately upon receipt of the news of the attack on the fishermen, England demanded an explanation and apology from the Russian government, but the Czar could not act until he received a report from Admiral Rojestvensky, commander of the Baltic fleet, and this came only after an irritating delay of four days. But the Admiral's report of the affair put the matter in a new light, and made an investigation necessary; but for this England would have sent an ultimatum and the crisis would have been reached immediately. Briefly stated, Admiral Rojestvensky alleges that no vessel in his fleet fired at any fishing vessels, but only at certain torpedo boats that came in sight and threatened to attack them. These torpedo boats, the Admiral alleges, had been sent out by arrangement of the Japanese, and it was in attacking these real enemies that the English fishermen unfortunately came within reach of the firing.

Such is the Russian story of the affair, and it is corroborated in a measure by the report of the Danish Marine Ministry, asserting that at Hull the Japanese had chartered torpedo boats to pursue and attack the Russian fleet on its way to the Orient. Whether the Russians were really attacked, or were only hysterical for fear of being attacked, cannot now be known. England certainly does not believe Rojestvensky's story, but she would forfeit the good will of other nations should she plunge into war without investigating further. It is stated on good authority, however, that if she were sure that France would remain neutral, she would not hesitate. The Hague Peace Tribunal is now to investigate the affair.

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How England Outwitted Russia in Tibet.

For some time relations between Russia and England have been somewhat strained, and on this account the Baltic fleet outrage was all the more dangerous. While England was busy fighting the Boers, Russia took advantage of the situation to force some commercial treaties favorable to herself and unfavorable to England; and since Russia has been absorbed in keeping out of the

way of the Japs, our British cousins have been playing the old Russian trick. Recently Lord Curzon has negotiated a highly favorable treaty with the Chinese province of Tibet, providing in fact that Tibet shall enter into no political relations with any foreign State save Great Britain. With subtle diplomacy, the treaty merely reaffirms and guarantees Tibet's "traditional policy" as to Great Britain—whereas England's proposed treaty fourteen years ago proved abortive and has never been put into effect. The so-called "traditional policy" therefore is really an entirely new policy and Russia has protested vigorously against this diplomatic victory of the British.

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More About the War.

Public attention last week was almost entirely directed from the actual conflict in Manchuria to the negotiations between English and Russian Governments in regard to the attack on the fishermen by the Baltic fleet. There has been further bombardment of Port Arthur, but there is no immediate prospect of the surrender of the fort.

The awful losses in the recent fighting on the Shalke have not yet been fully appreciated by the general public. In our country Gettysburg is a synonym for the terror of war, but the Federal loss there was only 3,063, while the Russian loss on the Shalke was 10,000.

As time goes on, it becomes increasingly evident that the differences between the Russian and Japanese armies is not so much a difference in the individual soldiers as in the systems which govern the two great fighting machines. The Japanese officials are animated by the highest patriotism and have no other ends to serve. Of the Russian officials, however, a writer in the November World's Work sums up the general opinion in these serious charges:

"The bureaucracy and the merchants in collusion have built up a perfectly organized system of graft. It is openly recognized, treated with tolerance, even thought of with respect. Not only do admirals buying coal in foreign ports procure receipts for much larger sums than they have paid, pocketing the difference and dividing it with their under officers, but no contract is let at home which does not allow a liberal margin for a 'rake-off.' In this way, Russia has paid for her railroads two and a half times the amount which the Minister of Finance estimates as their value—and by American standards, his estimate is 50 per cent higher than the necessary cost. It is said that fully 75 per cent of the large Red Cross Fund which was subscribed at home and abroad has been stolen. The magnificently equipped hospital train which the Czarina sent to the East was looted between St. Petersburg and Moscow. Not a thing of value was left in it."

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How the Trusts Control the Government.

At no other time has Judge Alton P. Parker appeared before the thoughtful citizens of America in such favorable light as when on last Monday he declared himself, with unaccustomed vigor, against the growing public corruption through the use of campaign funds. We may be pardoned for reprinting two paragraphs from Judge Parker's address:

"A startling change has taken place in the method of conducting campaigns; a change not for the better, but for the worse; a change that has introduced debasing and corrupt methods, which threatens the integrity of our Government, leaving it, perhaps, a republic in forms, but not a republic in substance—no longer a government of the people, by the people, for the people, but a government whose officers are practically chosen by a handful of corporate managers, who levy upon the assets of the stockholders whom they represent such sums of money as they deem

requisite to place the conduct of the Government in such hands as they consider best for their private interests.

"Some of the enterprises which have unduly thrived through favoritism, and which have been permitted by statute to indirectly levy tribute upon the people, have in the course of time become so rich and strong that they can and do contribute vast sums when it is made clear that it will advantage them, and they contribute upon the promise, direct or implied, that they shall be permitted to continue to tax the people for their own benefit."

This is indeed one of the gravest dangers to our American institutions, and Judge Parker's deliverance on this subject rings clearer than anything else that he has said. It probably is not true that Mr. Cortelyou has used his official knowledge gained as Secretary of Commerce and Labor to blackmail trusts into contributing to the Republican campaign fund, but because this might have been done, his appointment was certainly indelicate. As for Chairman Taggart, there is no reason to believe that he is a man of Judge Parker's high ideals; he would doubtless be glad to use all the trust money that he and August Belmont could possibly secure. It is rumored, however, that the Roosevelt administration has made terms with Wall Street, and that little money is forthcoming for the Democratic treasury, while another rumor declares that the Standard Oil Company is spending enormous sums to defeat the Republican candidate. It is certain that the trusts are not all on the Republican side as they were in 1896 and 1900.

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The Political Outlook.

However much one may disapprove of betting, there is no denying the fact that the men who risk hard-earned money on the results of the election never fail to watch very carefully the drift of public opinion, and that the course of betting therefore is generally, though not invariably, a pretty accurate political thermometer. For these reasons, the following news item will be read with interest by the general public:

"The betting on McKinley and Bryan ran at about 3 to 1 in both campaigns of 1896 and 1900. Accordingly, the prevailing odds of 4 to 1 as between Roosevelt and Parker, are exceptional. It is said in New York that between now and election day Democrats will make an heroic effort to bring the betting back nearer to what it was three months ago. Soon after the St. Louis convention the odds, favoring Roosevelt, stood at about 10 to 7."

The New York Herald, which had been supporting Judge Parker, last week practically conceded Roosevelt's election. The New York Journal, Mr. Hearst's paper, also warns Mr. Parker that he will be beaten unless he takes a bolder position as to trusts. Mr. Hearst, by the way, has accepted the Populist endorsement of his candidacy for Congress on the Democratic ticket, and he is said to have much more personal admiration for Tom Watson than for Judge Parker.

Mr. Fairbanks is still leading the strenuous life, being the most active campaigner in the hands of the National Republican committee. Mr. Fairbanks, whose lack of enthusiasm and magnetism has led to the nickname "Icebanks," is flattered by the frequently-expressed conviction that he will be the head of the ticket in 1908.

At this writing, a week before the election, all signs seem to point to Roosevelt's re-election, and the chances favor the Republicans in the contest for the control of the House, though here there is a much better prospect for Democratic victory than in the Presidential election.

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